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Abstract

The generation of people born between the years 1946-1965 is bigger than the younger generations and this generation is soon retiring. This will create challenges to organizations, when so many retire at the same time. This thesis concentrates on the challenge of knowledge transfer from the retiring ones to the younger, and especially on the tacit knowledge transfer. The research on this field is scarce; not much attention has been given to the imminent situation. The retiring workers have long work history, they are experienced, and have knowledge that will drain out of the organization, if it is not transferred further on. This thesis attempts to address the problem and find practical tools and ideas for tacit knowledge transfer, especially in non-profit organizations. The empirical study was conducted in Turku Customs, where there are many experienced workers who are soon to retire. The methodological approach for the thesis was qualitative case study. Interviews of soon to be retirees and new employees were conducted at Turku Customs.

Tacit knowledge is knowledge that cannot be codified and cannot be transferred by using traditional methods such as class-room teaching. Tacit knowledge transfer is time consuming and is more complex than transfer of explicit knowledge. There are, however, also ways to transfer tacit knowledge. It will transfer best when people meet face-to-face. Mentoring, job rotation and alumni networks are all practical tools for tacit knowledge transfer, mentioning few. Organizational culture should support knowledge transfer so that people are motivated to share their know-how.

In this thesis a conceptual framework for tacit knowledge transfer was created and it was applied to Turku Customs. Conclusions were drawn from broader level and managerial suggestions for Customs were presented. The results show that in order the tacit knowledge transfer is effective, a lot is to be done in the Customs. There were also many issues that were in order; the organizational culture supports informal knowledge transfer, people trust each other and informal mentoring takes place as well.

The knowledge transfer design, created for this research, can be applied to the Customs, but it needed some modification. The model for tacit knowledge transfer factors, that was also created for the purposes of this study, was examined from the Customs' point of view and it showed which factors in the Customs support knowledge transfer and where there is more to be done.

Both of the models can be applied at any organizations, but the knowledge transfer design needs to be modified to fit organizations. For example in Turku Customs the alumni networks is not a suitable tool for tacit knowledge transfer.

Key words	knowledge management, knowledge transfer, tacit knowledge, retirement
Further information	